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Mobbing perceptions of high school teachers

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Abstract

"The purpose of this study is to determine victim teachers of mobbing or the witness of mobbing at high schools as a life experience with general scanning model. The sample of this study consisted of 400 teachers working at high schools in Istanbul. The data were gathered through a questionnaire. Data were analyzed by t-tests, ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests. The results of data showed that non-appreciation & the criticism of the works they perform and rumoring about them the most common mobbing behaviours reported by teachers. Age, professional experience, status and career seemed to have a significant difference on mobbing."

Keywords: Mobbing, bullying, teachers

1. Introduction

Mobbing is defined by Heinz Leymann as "a type of psychological terror projecting a hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual (due to various reasons including differences of opinion and belief, envy and gender discrimination)" (Leymann, 1996). Used synonymously with bullying, psychological terror, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, victimization, mistreatment, psychological violence and harassment in literature, mobbing is different from other stress-creating workplace problems with its frequency (at least once a week), duration (at least for six months) and consisting of aggressive behavior (differentiating oneself and behavior towards communication, social relations, credibility, life quality and occupational status, and health of a person) (Leymann, 1996; Shuster, 1996). There may be a number of reasons for mobbing. Zapf (1999) describes these as reasons arising from the victim (character, qualification, social characteristics, stigmatizing), from the aggressor (hostility, envy, peer pressure, scapegoating), and organizational reasons (leadership, organizational climate, stress-builders, work organization) and claims that in mobbing, rather than one reason, a number of reasons interact for the issue to occur. He also asserts that what is described as a reason may in fact be a result of mobbing (Zapf, 1999). Mobbing is a process consisting of four phases with increasing intensity: 1st Phase: Critical Incidents: This stage begins with conflict. Mobbing behavior is not yet observed. But this does not mean that it will not happen. Victim may not feel distress in this phase. This phase can also be regarded as an elevated conflict. Because aggression is not yet obvious, mobbing is not seen. 2nd Phase: Mobbing and Stigmatizing: In mobbing behavior, continuity is important. In this phase, where psychological harassment begins, if

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this attitude continues every day and for a long period of time, if it is directed towards alienating the individual, then it can be argued that the mobbing has started.^{3rd} Phase: Personnel Administration: In this phase, the business administration believes that the victim is guilty. In other words, the reason for the second phase is the victim. The individual's character is criticized. Co-workers can also participate in this blaming. The administration stigmatizes the individual by disregarding its responsibility of “controlling the psycho-social state of the work environment”. The rights of the individual begin to be violated in this stage. In other words, now the administration is also involved in the situation.^{4th} Phase: Expulsion: In this phase where the victim seeks psychological or psychiatric support, if the administration and co-workers become aware of this, there might be some misevaluations. Some of these evaluations may include “paranoid character”, “mentally ill” or “difficult person”. Therefore the level of knowledge of health professionals is extremely important in diagnosis. If the victim is not offered a work environment that can turn this support into a functional one, the victim will want to distance himself/herself from the environment with sick leaves and finally, either will resign forcefully or get laid off (Davenport, Schwartz & Eliot, 2003; Leymann, 1996). When assessed from the perspective of consequences, this is a phenomenon that is harmful for the victim, the organization s/he works for and the economy of the country. Based on data from the World Health Organization, causes anxiety reactions, insensitivity, evading, attention problems, depression, fear, insecurity, sleep deprivation, irritability, melancholy, high blood pressure, tachycardia, cardiovascular diseases, dermatitis, hair loss, headache, muscle and joint pain, loss of balance, migraine, stomach pain, ulcer, eating disorder, and increase in consumption of alcohol, cigarette and drugs (Cassito, 2003). Mobbing is also a phenomenon that causes damages to both the organization and the economy of the country in terms of its consequences regarding negative organization climate, an insecure work environment, a decrease in creativity, disagreements, conflicts, sick leaves, specialist workers' resignations, a decrease in performance and quality of the work, compensations paid to workers, legal expenses, and early retirement charges (Davenport, Schwartz & Eliot, 2003; Tınaz, 2006). The purpose of this research is to determine the most and least common mobbing behaviors that the teachers are exposed to and whether there is a relation between the mobbing behavior and the teacher's gender, age, career, statute, seniority, level of education and being member of a syndicate. In order to achieve these objectives, the following questions are asked: 1. What are the most common mobbing behaviors that teachers are exposed to? 2. What are the least common mobbing behaviors that teachers are exposed to? 3. Does the perception of mobbing by the teacher depends on personal variables (gender, age, career, statute, seniority, level of education and syndicate membership)?

2. Method

2.1. Samples

The participants of this study are the teachers of working in 33 high schools in the counties of Bayrampasa, Besiktas, Sariyer and Sisli in Istanbul, Turkey. There is a total of 2620 teachers working in these schools. By reachable sampling, data were collected from 400 teachers during the 2009-2010 education year. The demographic distribution of participants who completed the data collection instrument were as follows: women (49%), men (51%); age 21-30 (32.8%), 31-40 (34%), 41-50 (20.2%), 51- (13%); teacher (91.8%), specialist teacher (8.2%); permanent staff (84.4%), contracted (9.3%), by-the-hour (5.3%); seniority with 5 years and less (35.3%), 6-10 (24.8%), 11-15 (16.8%), 16-20 (7.5%), 21 and more (15.6%); associate degree (6.4%), bachelor's degree (77.3%), graduate degree (16.3%); syndicated (53.2%), non-syndicated (46.8%).

2.2. Measures

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire containing closed-ended questions. The questionnaire has two sections: demographic information, followed by Yıldırım's Öğretmen Yönetici İlişkilerinde Yıldırma ve Etkileri (2008) consisting of 37 mobbing behaviors. Data were analyzed by percentage, aritmetical mean, standard deviation,

and series of t-tests, ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis tests. The instrument was Yıldırım's Mobbing Survey used previously on a sample of teachers. The instrument is one-dimensional and consists of 37 items.

3. Findings

According the teacher's perception the most common mobbing behaviors that the teachers are exposed to are "non-appreciation of the work done" ($X = 2.11$), "criticism of the work done" ($X = 2.02$) and "rumors about oneself" ($X = 1.98$), the least common mobbing behaviors are "experiencing sexual harassment (verbal, visual, physical etc)" ($X = 1.44$), "experiencing physical violence in school" ($X = 1.63$), "being ridiculed for physical appearance" ($X = 1.66$) and "being ridiculed for ethnicity" ($X = 1.66$). In the research conducted by Yıldırım (2008), the most common mobbing behaviors are identified as "non-appreciation of the work done" and "criticism of the work done". When gender, age, career, statute, seniority, level of education and membership to syndicate are analyzed based on their demographic variables in order to determine whether there is a difference in perception of being a victim of mobbing, the findings obtained from the analysis based on collected data are given under the sub headings regarding the demographic variables in the form of tables.

Findings Regarding Gender Variable: Descriptive statistics on whether there is a difference in mobbing perception based on the variable of teacher's gender and the results of t-test in independent groups are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on teacher's mobbing perception based on gender and results of t-tests

Gender	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standart Deviation	Degree of freedom	t	p
Male	204	78.49	20.74	398	-.44	.65
Female	196	79.39	19.54			

When Table 1 is examined, we can see that the average point female teachers got from mobbing instrument ($X = 79.39$) is higher than male teachers ($X = 78.49$). When the results of t-test are analyzed, it is seen that this average difference is not statistically meaningful in 0.05 level ($t = 0.44$ (398), $p > 0.05$). The study conducted by Keashly & Jagatic in (1999), reveals that gender is not a significant variable in being exposed to mobbing (Hoel, Faragher & Cooper, 2007, 21). The study by Isik (2007) indicates that there is no difference between mobbing perception and gender variable. The research by Tanoglu (2006) reveals no difference between mobbing and gender. The research conducted by Einarsen & Skogstad (1996) shows that gender is not a significant variable in being exposed to mobbing behavior. The research conducted by Acar & Dündar (2008) concludes that the gender variable does not create a meaningful difference in the frequency of being exposed to mobbing.

Findings Regarding Age Variable: Descriptive statistics indicating the points obtained by teachers based on age variable in mobbing instrument are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on mobbing perception based on teacher's age variable

Age	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standart Deviation	Standart Error
21-30	131	74.49	22.00	1.92
31-40	136	82.58	17.24	1.47
41-50	81	80.62	18.82	2.09
51 and over	52	77.92	22.48	3.11

When Table 2 is analyzed, the average points that participants got in mobbing instrument in age group 21-30 is ($X = 74.49$), in age group 31-40 is ($X = 82.58$), in age group 41-50 is ($X = 80.62$) and in age group 51 and over is ($X = 77.92$). In order to determine whether there is a difference in mobbing perception based on teachers' age groups, Kruskal Wallis Test was performed. Table 3 gives the results of Kruskal Wallis Test.

Table 3. Results of Kruskal Wallis test on mobbing perception based on teacher's age groups

Age	Number of participants	Mean rank	Degree of freedom	Chi-square	p
21-30	131	178.41	3	9.04	.02
31-40	136	220.40			
41-50	81	205.57			
51 and over	52	196.21			

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is observed that the perception of mobbing varies based on age and age group 31-40 is exposed to most mobbing while age group 21-30 to the least. The research conducted by Niedl (1996) indicates that university employees over 50 years of age are exposed to less mobbing than those under 50 years of age. The research conducted by Ceylan (2005) indicates that the teachers between 40-50 years of age are exposed to more mobbing. The reason for teachers in the age group 21-30 are exposed to least mobbing can be their strong will to work since they have just started their professional life, their experience being less and their level of awareness being low.

Findings Regarding Academic Career Variable: Descriptive statistics on whether there is a difference in mobbing perception based on the variable of academic career and the results of t-test in independent groups are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics on teacher's mobbing perception based on academic career variable and the results of t-test

Career	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	t	p
Teacher	367	78.35	20.11	398	-1.90	.05
Specialist Teacher	33	85.30	19.57			

When Table 4 is examined, we can see that the average point the teachers got from mobbing instrument ($X = 78.35$) is lower than specialist teachers ($X = 85.30$). It is seen that this average difference is statistically meaningful in 0.05 level ($t = 1.90$ (398), $p < 0.05$). Based on this, specialist teachers are exposed to more mobbing than teachers. The high level of experience and awareness of specialist teachers can be regarded as the reason for more mobbing.

Findings Regarding Status Variable: Descriptive statistics indicating the points obtained by teachers based on status variable in mobbing instrument are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics on mobbing perception based on teacher's status variable

Status	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Permanent	342	80.94	19.09	1.03
Contracted	37	71.08	20.20	3.32
By-the-hour	21	60.04	24.24	5.29

When Table 5 is analyzed, the average points that participants in permanent staff group got in mobbing instrument is ($X = 80.94$), in contracted staff group is ($X = 71.08$), and in by-the-hour staff group is ($X = 60.04$). The statistical meaning of difference in mobbing perception based on teachers' status variable is tested in unrelated groups with single direction variance analysis (ANOVA). Table 6 gives the results of single direction variance analysis (ANOVA).

Table 6. Results of Anova on mobbing perception on teacher's status variable

Source of variance	Sum of squares	sd	Average of squares	F	p
Between groups	11150.63	2	5575.31	14.68	.00
Within groups	150730.54	397	379.67		

When Table 6 is analyzed, it can be observed that the perception of mobbing in teachers varies with status variable. In order to determine in which status group the difference is, Tukey HSD test of Post-hoc test is performed. Table 7 gives the results of Tukey HSD test.

Table 7. Results of Tukey HSD test

Status (I)	Status(J)	Mean difference(I-J)	Standard error	p
Permanent (1)	Contracted (2)	9.86	3	.01
	By-the-hour (3)	20.89	4.38	.00
Contracted (2)	Permanent (1)	-9.86	3.37	.01
	By-the-hour (3)	11.03	5.32	.09
By-the-hour(3)	Permanent (1)	-20.89	4.38	.00
	Contracted(2)	-11.03	5.32	.09

As can be seen from Table 7, the points obtained by teachers in mobbing instrument vary with status variable. In the perception of mobbing, there is a difference in 0.5 meaning level between permanent teachers, and by-the-hour teachers ($I-J=20.89$, $p=.00$, $p<0.05$) and contracted teachers ($I-J=9.86$, $p=.01$, $p<0.5$). Among the contracted and by-the-hour teachers, there is no difference in 0.5 meaning level.

Findings Regarding Seniority Variable: Descriptive statistics indicating the points obtained by teachers based on seniority variable in mobbing instrument are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics on mobbing perception based on teacher's seniority variable

Seniority	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
5 years and less	141	74.18	22.14	1.86
6-10 years	99	80.51	18.13	1.82
11-15 years	64	86.79	14.43	1.80
16-20 years	30	80.93	19.31	3.52
21 and over	66	78.16	21.29	2.62

When Table 8 is analyzed, the average points that participants got in mobbing instrument in seniority group 5 years or less is ($X=74.18$), in seniority group 6-10 years is ($X=80.51$), in seniority group 11-15 years is ($X=86.79$), in seniority group 16-20 years is ($X=80.93$) and in seniority group 21 years and over is ($X=78.16$).

In order to determine whether the difference in mobbing perception based on teachers' seniority variable is statistically meaningful, Kruskal Wallis Test was performed. Table 9 gives the results of Kruskal Wallis Test.

Table 9. Results of Kruskal Wallis test on mobbing perception based on teachers' seniority groups

Seniority	Number of participants	Mean rank	sd	chi-square	p
5 years and less	141	176.08	4	15.14	.00
6-10 years	99	208.08			
11-15 years	64	241.24			
16-20 years	30	213.40			
21 and over	66	195.93			

When Table 9 is analyzed, it is observed that the perception of mobbing varies based on seniority and the group between 11-15 years is exposed to most mobbing while seniority group of 5 years or less is exposed to the least mobbing. The research conducted by Gökçe (2006) reveals that there is difference between seniority variable and mobbing perception, and some behavior are directed towards different age groups. The research conducted by Ceylan (2005) indicates that the teachers between 11-20 years of seniority are exposed to more mobbing. It can be argued that the reason for this may be the increasing level of awareness and occupational knowledge of teachers with their seniority level.

Findings Regarding the Level of Education Variable: Descriptive statistics indicating the points obtained by teachers based on level of education variable in mobbing instrument are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics on mobbing perceptions based on teachers' level of education variable

Level of education	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standard deviation	Standard error
Associate degree	26	83.34	23.64	4.63
Bachelor's degree	309	78.89	19.76	1.12
Graduate degree	65	77.32	20.52	2.54

When Table 10 is analyzed, the average points that participants in associate degree group got in mobbing instrument is ($X = 83.34$), in bachelor's degree group is ($X = 78.89$), and in graduate degree group is ($X = 77.32$).

The statistical meaning of difference in mobbing perception based on teachers' level of education variable is tested in unrelated groups with single direction variance analysis (ANOVA). Table 11 gives the results of single direction variance analysis (ANOVA).

Table 11. Results of Anova on mobbing perception based on teachers' level of education

Source of the variance	Sum of squares	sd	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	675.18	2	337.59	.83	.43
Within groups	161205.99	397	406.06		

When Table 11 is analyzed, it can be observed that the perception of mobbing in teachers does not vary with level of education variable. Apak's study in (2009) argues that there is no meaningful difference between teachers' perception on being exposed to mobbing and their level of education.

Findings Regarding Syndicate Membership Variable: Descriptive statistics on whether there is a difference in mobbing perception based on the variable of syndicate membership and the results of t-test in independent groups are given in Table 12.

Table 12. Descriptive statistics on teachers' mobbing perception based on syndicate membership variable and the results of t-test

Membership status	Number of participants	Arithmetical mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	t	p
Syndicated	213	78.50	18.87	398	-.45	.65
Non-syndicated	187	79.41	21.53			

When Table 12 is examined, we can see that the average point non-syndicated teachers got from mobbing instrument ($X = 79.41$) is higher than syndicated teachers ($X = 78.50$). When the results of t-test are analyzed, it is seen that this average difference is not statistically meaningful in 0.05 level ($t = -0.44$ (398), $p > 0.05$).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Mobbing is a serious workplace problem that is harmful both the victim, and the organization s/he works for in addition to the economy of the country. In a research focusing on high-risk sectors in terms of mobbing; educational organizations rank among the top (Hubert & Veldhoven, 2001). According to the research conducted by Gokce (2006) in educational organizations, teachers are mostly exposed to mobbing behaviors such as interruption, unfair criticisms, and their achievements being looked down. While age, type of school and branch do not create a meaningful difference in mobbing, gender does (Gokce, 2006). The results of this research conducted in education organizations are summarized below: According to the perceptions of teachers in secondary schools researched in Istanbul, while the most common mobbing behaviors that the teachers are exposed to are "non-appreciation of the work done", "criticism of the work done" and "rumors about oneself", the least common mobbing behaviors are "experiencing sexual harassment (verbal, visual, physical etc)", "experiencing physical violence in school", "being ridiculed for physical appearance" and "being ridiculed for ethnicity". There is no statistically meaningful difference between the mobbing perception of the teachers and gender variable. When the relation between age variable and mobbing perception is analyzed, it is determined that the teachers in age group 31-40 are exposed to most mobbing while age group 21-30 to the least. Based on the relation between career variable and mobbing perception of the

teachers, it can be argued that specialist teachers are exposed to more mobbing than teachers. According to status variable, teachers on permanent staff are exposed to more mobbing than contracted and by-the-hour teachers. Based on seniority variable, it can be claimed that teachers with a seniority of 11-15 years are exposed to more mobbing while teachers with a seniority of 5 years or less are exposed to least mobbing. There is no statistically meaningful difference between the mobbing perception of the teachers and level of education variable. There is no statistically meaningful difference between the mobbing perception of the teachers and syndicate membership variable.

Consequently it can be argued that teachers are exposed to mobbing behavior from administrators and personal characteristics might be a factor influencing this phenomenon. In future studies, researchers can investigate the mobbing perception of school administrators. In addition, not only mobbing victims, but also characteristics of aggressors and the reason for the mobbing behavior can also be investigated.

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